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The situation in Afghanistan

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The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/11 and Security Council resolution 2274 (2016), in which I was requested to report every three months on developments in Afghanistan.

2. The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including significant humanitarian, development and human rights efforts, since the issuance of my predecessor's report of 13 December 2016 (A/71/682-S/2016/1049). It also provides a summary of key political and security developments and regional and international events relating to Afghanistan. The annex to the present report contains an assessment of progress made towards the achievement of benchmarks and indicators since the issuance of the report of 7 March 2016 (A/70/775-S/2016/218), in accordance with Security Council resolution 1868 (2009).

II. Relevant developments

3. The Government continued to face significant political, economic and security challenges. The President of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, and the Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah, continued to engage in bilateral discussions to improve their working relationship. An investigation into the role of the First Vice-President, Abdul Rashid Dostum, in the alleged illegal detention and abuse of a former Governor of Jowzjan Province was launched. Several key government positions remain vacant. The newly formed electoral management bodies took initial steps towards implementing electoral reforms and preparing for future elections. The Government also continued to advance its anti-corruption agenda. In parallel, the implementation of the peace agreement with Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin advanced, including the lifting of sanctions against Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, but there was no

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discernible progress on peace talks between the Government and the Taliban. There was an increase in multilateral engagement at the regional level. The security situation continued to worsen, with armed clashes between security forces and the Taliban reaching a record high in 2016 and continuing at that pace in 2017. High levels of violence against civilians continued to be recorded as a result, with a significant increase in casualties among children and in internal displacements. Service delivery remained challenging given the difficult security situation. The economic situation remained fragile, with persistently low rates of economic growth and low investment rates.

A. Political developments

4. Since the previous report, the President and the Chief Executive continued their efforts to improve their working relationship. The two leaders discussed a mechanism to consult on senior appointments, share power and delegate responsibility among senior government officials.

5. On 13 December, the former Governor of Jowzjan, Ahmad Ishchi, publicly accused the First Vice-President of illegally detaining him for several days in late November and alleged that he had been sexually abused while in custody. The Government announced an investigation into the allegations, and, on 21 December, the Attorney General formally named Mr. Dostum a suspect. The First Vice-President has so far refused to comply with the Attorney General's summons for questioning. Prominent figures within the First Vice-President's political party, Junbish-i Milli, accused the Government of attempting to marginalize the ethnic Uzbek community and organized demonstrations to protest the Government's treatment of the First Vice-President.

6. The President continued his outreach efforts to critics and opposition figures, including two of the country's largest political opposition groups, the Afghanistan Protection and Stability Council and the High Council of National and Jihadi Parties, as well as the Governor of Balkh Province, Atta Mohammad Noor. Opposition groups maintained pressure on the Government to make appointments and other concessions, but toned down their public criticism of the President and the Chief Executive.

7. The future of the seven ministers who were the subject of votes of no-confidence in the National Assembly in November remained uncertain. Six continued serving in their positions, while a Supreme Court decision on the constitutionality of the votes of no-confidence remained pending. Several positions within the Government remained occupied by acting officials, including the Minister of Mines and Petroleum, the head of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, the Minister of Information and Culture, the Minister of Information and Communications Technology and the Minister of Tribal Affairs.

8. On 21 January, the Chairperson of the High Peace Council, Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani, died. At the time of his death, the Government was reportedly planning to formulate a new Afghan national peace and reconciliation strategy.

9. There has been no discernible progress towards a peace process between the Government and the Taliban. The implementation of the peace agreement of 29 September 2016 with Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin advanced with the removal of the group's leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, from the list of individuals sanctioned under resolution 1267 (1999) on 3 February, following a request from the Government of Afghanistan submitted on 13 December. Representatives of Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin continued negotiations with the Government on issues such as the release of prisoners and accommodation arrangements for affiliates expected to return from

Pakistan. The prospect of Mr. Hekmatyar's return to Kabul has been cause for concern among his political rivals, who believe that a united Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin under his leadership could become the country's largest political party. Human rights advocates have expressed their concern about the agreement, given its failure to fully address victims' grievances and suspected human rights violations.

10. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) facilitated a number of events in support of local peace initiatives during the reporting period to address, inter alia, long-standing land disputes and other sources of tension and conflict.

11. The Independent Election Commission and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission, appointed in November 2016, took the initial steps towards implementing electoral reforms and preparing for future elections. The Independent Election Commission began its work, which included a technical study on electoral constituencies for submission to the Government, proposals on voter registration, the reallocation of polling centres and an electoral timeline. It also held consultative meetings on electoral constituencies and voter registration with stakeholders on 17 and 30 January. The Independent Election Commission publicly reaffirmed its commitment to establishing polling centre-based voter lists, in accordance with electoral law, and its spokesperson announced that electronic national identification cards will not be used for voter registration. On 10 February, the Independent Election Commission spokesperson announced that parliamentary and district council elections would be held in 2018. The Independent Electoral Complaints Commission reached out to electoral stakeholders, and, on 30 January, signed a memorandum of understanding with civil society organizations that outlines terms for their future cooperation.

12. The Independent Election Commission also commenced the recruitment process for the position of Chief Electoral Officer. On 12 January, the Commission recommended three candidates to the President in a letter signed by only four of the seven commissioners. On 26 January, a spokesperson for the Chief Executive publicly stated that the three nominees were unacceptable owing to their alleged lack of qualifications and ties to previous commissioners. On 3 February, election watchdog groups criticized the Government for its silence and called for a decision preserving the independence of the Commission.

B. Security

13. The overall security situation continued to deteriorate throughout 2016 and into 2017. The United Nations recorded 23,712 security incidents, an almost 5 per cent increase compared with 2015 and the highest number in a single year ever recorded by UNAMA. While the fighting remained particularly prevalent in the five southern and eastern provinces of Helmand, Nangarhar, Kandahar, Kunar and Ghazni, where 50 per cent of all incidents were recorded, the conflict spread in geographical scope, with increasing Taliban activities in northern and north-eastern Afghanistan, as well as in Farah in the west. The Taliban continued to put pressure on the Government's control of the provincial capitals of Farah, Kunduz, Lashkar Gah, Helmand Province, and Tirin Kot, Uruzgan Province. International and Afghan air support and the deployment of Afghan special forces remained critical to the holding of these cities. In late November, the Taliban captured the Ghorak district administrative centre of Kandahar Province, bringing to 14 the total number of districts claimed by the Taliban to be under their control. In addition, the control of a number of districts has been contested, with some reports claiming an increase in the percentage of Afghan territory under Taliban influence. The fighting evolved further in character as the number of armed clashes between the Taliban and

Government security forces increased by 22 per cent in 2016, accounting for 63 per cent of all security incidents, the majority of which were initiated by the Taliban. Improvised explosive device attacks continued to decline in 2016, however, and were 25 per cent lower than during the previous year.

14. Between 18 November 2016 and 14 February 2017, the United Nations recorded 5,160 security-related incidents. This represents a 10 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2015 and a 3 per cent increase compared with the same period in 2014. The number of armed clashes recorded in January 2017 increased by 30, compared with January of 2016, and reached 1,877, the highest number recorded by the United Nations for that month. Improvised explosive device attacks increased by 11 per cent compared with the same period in 2016. The Taliban also increased the pressure in Helmand Province, including through heavy fighting in the district of Sangin in late January and early February.

15. On 10 January, an improvised explosive device detonated at the residence of the Governor of Kandahar during a dinner he was hosting for visiting diplomats and dignitaries, killing 13 civilians, including 6 diplomats from the United Arab Emirates, and injuring 19 others. On 15 February, the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, who was injured in the attack, died from his wounds. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

16. The Afghan security forces continued to face significant challenges, in particular regarding operational capacity. Shortcomings in the areas of command and control, leadership and logistics, and high attrition rates, have a significant impact on morale, recruitment and sustainability. The intensifying conflict resulted in increasing casualties among both the security forces and the Taliban. Re-enlistment and retention rates are too low to compensate for the losses incurred through increased casualties and desertion. By February, the numbers of army troop members and Afghan National Police officers stood at 86 per cent and 94 per cent of projected levels, respectively.

17. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) maintained its presence in southern Nangarhar Province, as well as in Kunar and Nuristan Provinces. Notwithstanding the clearing operations of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, with the support of international military forces, by the end of 2016, the group reportedly returned to the areas from which they were cleared.

18. During the reporting period, there were 21 incidents involving United Nations personnel, including seven incidents of intimidation, one improvised explosive device-related incident, seven criminal related incidents, and the theft of one United Nations vehicle.

C. Regional cooperation

19. During the reporting period, there was a marked increase in bilateral diplomatic outreach between Afghanistan and its neighbours. Bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan continued to be strained, however. In the wake of the suicide attack perpetrated in Kandahar City on 10 January, Afghan officials, including National Security Adviser Hanif Atmar and Chief of Police of Kandahar Province Abdul Razziq, publicly blamed the attack on foreign actors. Demonstrations were held outside the embassy of Pakistan in Kabul and outside its consulates in Kandahar and Herat, at which protestors called upon the Government to cut diplomatic ties with Pakistan. The recently appointed Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan, General Javed Bajwa, placed a telephone call to his Afghan counterpart and to the President and the Chief Executive of Afghanistan, on 31 December 2016. General Bajwa also called the President on 15 January to offer condolences over the

Kandahar attack of 10 January and to discuss cooperation on security issues. Bilateral tensions increased again, however, following a series of attacks in Pakistan. Senior Pakistani officials blamed some of the attacks on insurgents based in Afghanistan. Following those incidents, Pakistan closed its border with Afghanistan to all traffic and conducted cross-border shelling, targeting suspected militants on Afghan territory.

20. On 9 and 10 January, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Hekmat Karzai, led an Afghan delegation to Tashkent for the first round of an Afghanistan-Uzbekistan political dialogue. On 11 January, the Chief Executive led a high-level delegation to Tehran. During the visit, he met with the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, and discussed support for Afghanistan on security and political issues. On 17 January, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Salahuddin Rabbani, led a delegation to the United Arab Emirates, subsequent to the Kandahar attack of 10 January. Subsequently, the President of Afghanistan visited the United Arab Emirates on 11 and 12 February to extend his condolences to the families of the victims of the attack. From 6 to 8 February, Mr. Rabbani visited Moscow, meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, to discuss cooperation on a range of issues, including economic and security matters. The two sides reaffirmed the common position that the Taliban should be involved in constructive dialogue towards a peace process.

21. There was an increase in multilateral engagement at the regional level. The sixth "Heart of Asia" ministerial conference was held in Amritsar, India, on 4 December. At a trilateral meeting held in Moscow on 27 December, China, Pakistan and the Russian Federation discussed the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan objected to the exclusion of Afghanistan from the meeting. Participation at the following meeting, held in Moscow on 15 February, was expanded to include six countries, including Afghanistan, India and Iran (Islamic Republic of). Following the meeting, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation issued a statement noting that participants had agreed to accelerate their efforts to support the Afghan peace process and announcing that the Central Asian republics would be invited to attend the next regional meeting on Afghanistan.

22. Economic cooperation also increased during the reporting period. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov, visited Kabul on 23 and 24 January, and, during that visit, a bilateral economic road map was announced, under which annual trade between the two countries is projected to grow from $429 million in 2016 to $1.5 billion in 2017. Mr. Kamilov met with the President and the Chief Executive of Afghanistan and signed five memorandums of understanding with his counterpart in Afghanistan, Mr. Rabbani.

III. Human rights

23. The human rights situation deteriorated further in 2016 and into 2017, with the continued growing toll of the fighting on the civilian population. On 6 February 2017, UNAMA released its annual report for 2016 on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It found that civilians increasingly suffered the consequences of the conflict in Afghanistan, with the highest number of civilian casualties in a single year documented by UNAMA since 2009. UNAMA documented 11,418 civilian casualties (3,498 dead and 7,920 injured), a 3 per cent increase compared with 2015. Conflict-related violence also destroyed homes, livelihoods and property, displaced thousands of families and restricted access to education, health and other services throughout the year. UNAMA attributed 61 per cent of all civilian casualties to

anti-government elements and 24 per cent to pro-government forces, of which 20 per cent was attributed to Afghan national security forces, 2 per cent to international military forces and 2 per cent to pro-government armed groups. Ground engagements between pro-government forces and anti-government elements remained the leading cause of civilian casualties, accounting for 4,295 casualties (1,070 dead and 3,225 injured), followed by the detonation of improvised explosive devices, complex and suicide attacks and targeted and deliberate killings.

24. UNAMA has documented an increase in attacks carried out by ISIL-KP targeting civilian government administrations, tribal elders and places of worship. The mission attributed 899 civilian casualties (209 dead and 690 injured) to ISIL-KP in 2016, compared with 82 civilian casualties (39 dead and 43 injured) in 2015. The majority of these casualties resulted from a pattern of deliberate sectarian attacks against the minority Shia Muslim community. ISIL-KP claimed responsibility for three separate attacks on 23 July, 11 October and 21 November 2016 that targeted members of the community living in Kabul.

25. Anti-government elements continued to perpetrate deliberate attacks targeting civilian government officials, including women, during the reporting period. On 21 December, the Taliban claimed responsibility for a complex attack against the home of a member of parliament in Kabul, in which eight civilians were killed and seven others were injured. In addition to the attack by anti-government elements on the residence of the Governor of Kandahar Province on 10 January, on the same day, the parliamentary administration compound in Kabul was hit by a suicide attack, for which the Taliban claimed responsibility and in which 34 civilians were killed and 75 others were injured. On 7 February, 20 civilians were killed and at least 40 injured in a suicide attack outside the Supreme Court in Kabul.

26. Children continued to suffer disproportionately from violence. During 2016, the country task force on monitoring and reporting documented 1,707 verified incidents of killing and maiming, resulting in 3,512 child casualties (923 dead and 2,589 injured), a 24 per cent increase compared with 2015. In the fourth quarter of 2016, the task force verified 440 incidents that had resulted in 1,009 child casualties Of the 268 dead were 200 boys, 66 girls and 2 undetermined and, of the 741 injured, 520 boys, 216 girls and 5 undetermined. With respect to the recruitment and use of children by the parties to the conflict, the task force documented 57 incidents involving the recruitment or use of 91 boys in 2016. The majority of those children were recruited or used by anti-government elements.

27. On 4 December 2016, at the request of the Minister of Justice, UNAMA released a comprehensive assessment of juvenile rehabilitation centres in Afghanistan which measured compliance with United Nations international standards for the treatment of juveniles deprived of their liberty. In the assessment, UNAMA noted positive trends in juvenile rehabilitation centres in Afghanistan, while also outlining the critical need to improve in-detention education and post-rehabilitation care for young Afghans to help them to re-enter society. UNAMA is now supporting the Ministry of Justice in the implementation of those recommendations. As at 31 December 2016, 122 boys were being held in the adult maximum security detention facility in Parwan on national security-related charges, including for association with armed groups.

28. The targeting of health and educational facilities and workers continued. In 2016, UNAMA verified 119 conflict-related incidents targeting health services or health-care workers which resulted in 23 civilian casualties (10 dead and 13 injured) and 42 civilian abductions, consistent with figures documented in 2015. In addition, UNAMA documented the occupation and use of 23 medical facilities for military purposes. In the last quarter of 2016, the country task force on monitoring and

reporting, using its own methodology, documented 31 verified incidents targeting health facilities and health-related personnel. In 2016, UNAMA verified 94 conflict-related incidents targeting education facilities and education-related personnel, representing a 20 per cent decrease compared with 2015, which resulted in 91 civilian casualties (24 dead and 67 injured) and negatively impacted children's access to education. UNAMA continued to record the use of educational facilities for military purposes by parties to the armed conflict. In 2016, it documented the use of 42 educational facilities, mainly by Afghan security forces, which occupied or used 34 schools.

29. Violence against women remained prevalent. On 17 December, five female contractors of a security company operating at Kandahar International Airport were killed on their way to work by unidentified armed men. In addition, UNAMA documented the execution of a woman by anti-government elements in Badghis Province on 15 December and two additional incidents involving the lashing of women in Ghazni Province for alleged "moral crimes". On 25 December, anti-government elements beheaded a woman in Sari Pul Province after she had reportedly openly criticized the practices of the Taliban. On 26 January in Farah Province, a group of Taliban fighters killed a 50-year-old woman when they failed to locate her sister, an Afghan National Police officer, who was their intended target. On 1 February in the Faizabad district of Badakhshan Province, armed assailants killed an 18-year-old young woman, reportedly for her refusal of a marriage proposal from the Taliban's shadow governor. The United Nations continued to support 11 centres for the protection of women and five family guidance centres providing life-saving and essential services to women in need in nine provinces, out of a total of 37 such centres.

30. During the reporting period, the provincial administrations continued to establish gender and women's affairs committees mandated with mainstreaming concrete gender equality initiatives in the work of departments in their respective provinces. Committees are now operational in at least 12 provinces. On 5 December, the Government publically launched its strategy and action plan for the elimination of violence against women for the period 2016-2020. On 9 January, a joint commission comprising members of the lower and upper houses of the National Assembly approved the revised text of the law on the elimination of harassment against women and children. The law is awaiting the endorsement of the President. Discussions on funding for the implementation of the national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), however, remained inconclusive. At the same time, the National Security Council has initiated the drafting of a strategy for countering violent extremism, and consultations with various stakeholders are under way.

31. On penal reform, in January, an annex to the current Penal Code of 1976 was approved by the National Assembly and endorsed by the President. It criminalizes land usurpation, for the first time, as well as incorrect asset declarations and illicit enrichment. The revised Penal Code was approved, in principle, by the Cabinet of Ministers in September. The Penal Code is currently under review by the High Council on Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption before it will be submitted to the National Assembly.

IV. Implementation of the Kabul process and the coordination of development assistance

32. The economic situation remained fragile in Afghanistan. The most recent World Bank estimate of the 2016 growth rate stands at 1.2 per cent, representing a

modest increase from 2015 but still marginally lower than earlier projections. The Government continued its fiscal reforms, reporting in December that it had exceeded the International Monetary Fund targets for domestic revenue collection in 2016, with an increase of 34 per cent in nominal value and 27 per cent in real terms, compared with 2015. Investor concerns about security and the degree to which the country provided a business-enabling environment, however, continued to negatively affect investor confidence.

33. The national budget for the Afghan fiscal year A.H. 1396 (A.D. 2016/17) was approved by the National Assembly and promulgated on 23 January. The national budget of $6.4 billion was reduced by 7.7 per cent relative to the previous year's budget. The largest reduction, of over $415 million, was in the security sector, as a result of fuel procurement costs for both the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence having been taken "off budget" and bilaterally procured and supplied. Further reductions were made to the development budgets for health and economic governance, as well as for infrastructure, although the latter sector is expected to receive more than half of development expenditure for 2016/17. The budget for development projects self-funded by the government was also reduced by 8 per cent relative to the previous year's budget.

34. The United Nations country team initiated its midterm review of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. In discussions convened subsequent to the meeting held in Brussels in October 2016 on the implementation of the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework, a number of donors in Kabul indicated that they were similarly engaged in strategic planning or review exercises and agreed to coordinate discussions with a view to developing shared contextual analyses. Such discussions began in Kabul on 19 January, with emphasis placed on the importance of service delivery in a context of declining access, the role of extractive industries in development, linkages between humanitarian and development initiatives, challenges to job creation, engagement with civil society organizations and the reliability, handling and interpretation of data.

35. The Government continued to pursue its anti-corruption agenda. On 29 January, the new permanent premises of the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre were inaugurated in Kabul. To date, the Centre has tried six first-instance cases, of which three have had their convictions affirmed on appeal, including a complex $360,000 embezzlement case involving nine accused. On 9 January, the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre trial court convicted a major general of the Ministry of the Interior on charges of bribery and sentenced him to 14 years' imprisonment. On 15 February, a district Police Chief was convicted of money-laundering and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Prosecutors with the Centre recently indicted the Deputy Minister of Urban Development on embezzlement charges involving hundreds of millions of dollars. His trial is pending. Consultations on the drafting of the national anti-corruption strategy and anti-corruption law to reform government prevention and oversight institutions continued.

36. The Cabinet of Ministers approved the independent land authority's proposed land management law on 7 December 2016. It will be submitted to the National Assembly for its endorsement when it reconvenes on 6 March 2017. The draft law provides for the criminalization of land usurpation, strengthening the role of the authority in land registration and titling and providing greater security of land tenure for women.

37. The Government continued its efforts to improve governance at subnational levels. The Independent Directorate of Local Governance took steps to restructure all its capacity-building, monitoring and evaluation programmes. On 24 January, a new capacity-building strategy was put forward for internal government

consultations. The merit-based recruitment of 34 gender specialists and 34 monitoring and evaluation specialists commenced, with a view to mainstreaming gender perspectives in administration at the local level. The specialists are to be based out of the offices of provincial governors. In 2016, as part of the Government's efforts to ensure merit-based civil service recruitment, all new appointments were made through a merit-based process, bringing the total number of merit-based appointments to 53 district governors (14 per cent) and five deputy provincial governors (15 per cent). A total of 20 mayors (12 per cent) were appointed directly by the President.

38. To bolster the number of women officers in the Afghan National Police, 250 new women recruits were given training in Sivas, Turkey, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme. The recruits finished their four-month training programme on 5 January and were assigned to posts within the Afghan National Police. Nevertheless, the total number of women police officers within the police force remains below 2 per cent.

V. Humanitarian assistance

39. The humanitarian situation further deteriorated in 2016 and into 2017, with record numbers of new, conflict-induced internal displacements, a situation compounded by the return of more than 620,000 refugees and undocumented Afghans from Pakistan. The number of newly internally displaced persons in 2016 was recorded as 651,751 in 32 of 34 provinces, with more than 45 per cent of them displaced between October and December. This is the highest number of internally displaced persons recorded in the region, with 220 districts recording conflict-induced displacement and a 38 per cent overall increase compared with 2015. To date in 2017, 12,863 persons have been newly displaced, with 17 of 34 provinces already recording some level of forced displacement. The United Nations and non-governmental organizations provided humanitarian assistance, including cash, health services and supplies, shelter, food and non-food items, to the displaced populations.

40. The situation was further exacerbated during the second half of 2016 by the surge in the number of refugees returning through the voluntary repatriation programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). As at 31 December, a total of 370,102 Afghans had registered as refugees returned from Pakistan, 2,290 returned from Iran (Islamic Republic of) and 185 returned from other countries. UNHCR suspended activities at encashment centres for the winter period on 15 December. At a tripartite meeting of Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR on 15 February 2017, it was decided to resume the repatriation programme on 1 April. According to the results of extensive monitoring, returnees spent their reintegration cash grant ($400 per person on average) on meeting their immediate needs. Typically, cash grants were expended within two to three months.

41. The deportation and return of undocumented Afghans from Pakistan also increased significantly during the second half of 2016, with more than 214,000 arrivals, compared with 34,000 for the first six months of the year, for a total of 248,189 arrivals in 2016. This trend continued in 2017; as at 11 February, 8,300 undocumented Afghans had returned from Pakistan, close to the figure for the entire first quarter of 2016 (9,335 arrivals). The rate of arrivals remained steady from the Islamic Republic of Iran, averaging 30,000 to 40,000 per month. This trend also continued in 2017, with 39,151 undocumented Afghans returning from the Islamic Republic of Iran as at 11 February 2017. Of those from Pakistan, 7,563 had

spontaneously returned and 737 had been deported. Of those from the Islamic Republic of Iran, 20,912 had spontaneously returned and 18,239 had been deported. Returnees from Pakistan continue to cite increased policing and uncertainty over their status in Pakistan, including fear of eviction, as the main reasons for leaving. The numbers of returnees are anticipated to increase when the UNHCR repatriation programme resumes.

42. Many of the newly internally displaced and returnee Afghans in Afghanistan remained vulnerable to secondary or repeated displacement owing to the growing severity and reach of the conflict and a rise in commodity prices, as well as a scarcity of services and jobs in areas of high returnee settlement, in particular in the Baghlan, Kabul, Kunduz Laghman and Nangarhar Provinces. Although the large urban centres of Jalalabad and Kabul became a destination of choice, in particular among undocumented returnees, the absorption capacity in urban settings, in particular in terms of access to land, health care and education, was limited. A policy framework for returnees and internally displaced persons that addresses issues such as harmonization of support, free choice of settlement, the provision of identity cards and an action plan for returnees and internally displaced persons was adopted on 14 February.

43. The migration of Afghans to Europe decreased in 2016. Approximately 42,000 of the 362,000 arrivals by sea were Afghans, accounting for 12 per cent of arrivals. This is a significant decrease compared with 2015, when Afghans accounted for 21 per cent of an estimated one million arrivals. At the same time, the number of returnees from Europe significantly increased during 2016, with 6,864 returnees assisted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), compared with 1,419 in 2015. Between 1 November 2016 and 11 February 2017, IOM provided assistance to 1,045 voluntary returnees from Europe. During the autumn, a number of bilateral readmission agreements were signed between the Governments of several European countries and the Government of Afghanistan. In addition, the Government and the European Union agreed upon a joint way forward on migration issues which included provisions on readmission and return.

44. In 2016, Afghanistan continued to host a significant number of refugees from Pakistan who fled military operations in North Waziristan that were launched in 2014. By the end of 2016, the number of those refugees stood at 125,000. Most refugees reside in host communities with tribal affinities, although one camp for approximately 20,000 individuals was established in Khost Province. Humanitarian partners focused interventions on promoting self-sufficiency and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable. In early 2017, an agreement was reached between refugee elders and representatives of the federally administered tribal areas of Pakistan which resulted in the return of a small number of refugees to Pakistan. The majority of refugees have stated their intent to remain in Afghanistan, pending further assurances of their protection and the availability of reintegration assistance in their areas of origin in Pakistan.

45. Constraints on humanitarian access continued to be recorded and were primarily owing to insecurity. In total, 200 incidents affecting non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and other international humanitarian organizations were registered in 2016, compared with 255 in 2015. Overall, in 2016, 15 aid workers were killed and 26 injured, compared with 66 killed and 91 injured during the previous year. A total of 121 aid workers were abducted in 2016. Incidents against aid workers increased again in January 2017, with 42 incidents reported, compared with 17 in January 2016. Health workers and facilities in Afghanistan continue to be affected, with 29 incidents occurring during January 2017 countrywide. On 8 February, national staff from the International Committee of the Red Cross travelling in Jowzjan Province came under attack and six were

killed. The overall decrease in security incidents is largely attributed to enhanced security measures and a reduced humanitarian footprint. Polio eradication efforts were particularly challenged by security and access constraints. Accessibility improved in eastern Afghanistan following dialogues regarding access, and the number of inaccessible children was reduced from 73,355 in the August 2016 subnational immunization campaign to 17,488 in the December campaign.

46. Owing to the number of vulnerable Afghan returnees returning to areas of recent or historic conflict, the United Nations and mine action partners provided risk education on mines and explosive remnants of war to returnees. Since January, 16,391 returnees have received this education. In addition, in the period between 1 November 2016 and 31 January 2017, mine action partners, coordinated by the Mine Action Service, have declared 37 communities mine-free. This enables approximately 10,000 individuals, across 12.05 km2, to move freely within their community to pursue their education and conduct agricultural and business activities. However, it is estimated that 3,635 minefields, 318 battlefields and 59 contaminated firing ranges remain, which affects 1,527 communities, in addition to the continued threat from pressure-plate improvised explosive devices.

47. On 21 January 2017, the Government and the United Nations launched an appeal for $550 million for the humanitarian response plan, which aimed at meeting the critical humanitarian needs of 5.7 million people. This is a 13 per cent increase owing to the increasing population displacements as a result of the continued and expanding conflict. Overall, some 9.3 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2016, the humanitarian response plan was 83.8 per cent funded. Overall humanitarian funding reached $535.4 million in 2016. Of that, $284.1 million of the requested $339 million designated for activities envisaged in the humanitarian response plan was received.

VI. Counter-narcotics

48. After a decline in 2015, poppy cultivation and opium production rose again during the reporting period. On 24 December, the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics, with support from the United Nations, released the full report of the Afghanistan opium survey for 2016. As previously reported, an increase in poppy cultivation of 10 per cent compared with 2015 and a 45 per cent increase in opium production is noted. The increase is largely attributed to a larger yield per hectare and the fact that poppy cultivation areas subject to eradication decreased by 91 per cent. Between 1 November 2016 and 31 January 2017, Afghan law enforcement authorities conducted a total of 517 counter-narcotics operations, which resulted in the seizure of 1,076 kg of heroin, 23,600 kg of morphine, 15,370 kg of opium, 4 kg of methamphetamine, 266,933 kg of hashish, 686 K-Tablet (synthetic drug) tablets, 32,024 kg of solid precursor chemicals and 10,924 litres of liquid precursor chemicals. In addition, 583 suspects were arrested, 25 heroin processing laboratories were dismantled and 126 vehicles, 39 weapons, 102 mobile telephones and seven radios were seized. One member of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces was killed and six were wounded in the course of these operations.

49. A new law on countering narcotics, which was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2016, is now with the National Assembly. On 27 January, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime released the first assessment of the synthetic drug situation in Afghanistan, in which the Office indicated that methamphetamine use is becoming established practice among opiate users. Not only are methamphetamines increasingly being seized by law enforcement in Afghanistan, but there is also evidence of manufacturing facilities in the western part of the country.

50. The 13th meeting of the policy consultative group was held on 1 and 2 February 2017 in Vienna. The more than one hundred participants from 30 countries and 11 organizations discussed the four pillars of the Vienna Declaration, namely regional cooperation and initiatives, illicit financial flows, precursor chemicals and drug demand reduction. The 12th meeting of senior officials of the triangular initiative between Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran (Islamic Republic of) was held on 3 February in Vienna to take stock of progress made and explore future cooperation in jointly addressing drug trafficking. The three countries renewed their commitment to make joint planning fully operational and intensify border controls, including developing mechanisms for border meetings among commanders of border provinces and the counter-narcotics police to exchange information and intelligence, and to hold regular meetings of the heads of counter-narcotics entities in the three countries.

VII. Mission support

51. Between 1 November 2016 and 31 January 2017, UNAMA conducted 195 road and 16 air missions, as well as 580 reverse outreach missions, during which district representatives visited UNAMA field offices.

VIII. Observations

52. Afghanistan continues to face a range of complex challenges. Worsening conflict has resulted in record levels of civilian casualties and internally displaced persons. The rising numbers of returning refugees and undocumented Afghans has put further strain on social and economic conditions. The Government also continues to face both internal and external political challenges. Addressing all of those challenges will continue to require the determined resolve of the Government. In that regard, a cohesive working relationship between the President and the Chief Executive will remain vital.

53. I welcome the continuing steps taken to further implement electoral reforms and move towards the preparations for parliamentary elections. The Government's commitment, at the highest level, to holding credible and transparent parliamentary elections is heartening. As important as electoral reforms are, so too is fostering public trust in the reforms, institutions and the democratic exercise.

54. The Government has made efforts to improve its fiscal management, including revenue collection. For the first time, infrastructure spending received more than half of development expenditure this year. In the longer term, a balance between infrastructure development and adequate investment in human capital is vital to promote social development and public confidence in the State. The country's large youth population represents both a challenge, in terms of the provision of employment, and an important opportunity for the country's future.

55. The Government has advanced its agenda to fight corruption, in particular through the operationalization of the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre. It will be important to build on this achievement in order to fully realize the Government's broader anti-corruption agenda and to promote public and donor confidence in its institutions.

56. The conflict has intensified yet again, with increasing numbers of armed clashes and complex attacks. The Afghan security forces, with the support of international forces, have demonstrated resilience in the light of intensifying combat operations. Continued international support for Afghan security forces, in

accordance with the commitments made during the summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization held in Warsaw in 2016, remains essential. Strong political leadership, effective measures to enhance command and control structures, operational capacity and morale are all critical to ensuring the sustainability of the Afghan security forces in the coming year and beyond, given the high, and increasing, casualty rate.

57. Civilians continue to pay a heavy price for the conflict. UNAMA recorded the highest number of civilian casualties in a single year, partly as a result of escalating ground engagements. The rising number of children killed and injured is unacceptable. I call upon all parties to the conflict to take urgent steps to halt the killing and maiming of civilians and stress the need for accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. The full implementation of the national civilian casualty prevention and mitigation policy is of the utmost urgency. Attacks on health-care facilities, educational facilities, health-care workers and educators must cease.

58. Displacement reached its highest levels in 2016. More returns, including refugees and undocumented Afghans, are expected from Pakistan this year. Many of the newly internally displaced and returnee Afghans in Afghanistan remain vulnerable to secondary or repeated displacement, which has worrisome implications for those groups which are at risk of being trapped in prolonged poverty. I welcome the proposed changes in the policy of the Government of Afghanistan on displacement and returnees. Medium- and long-term programmes will be required to absorb and integrate the large number of returnees who have already arrived and will continue to arrive in order to ensure their successful economic and social integration. I commend the Government for its engagement and dedication in addressing the issue and urge international partners to support its efforts.

59. The worsening security situation and its impact on civilians have deepened the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Given the extraordinary humanitarian needs, strong international support and adequate funding to the national humanitarian response plan for 2017 is needed.

60. The toll of the conflict on civilians also underscores the urgency for a political solution to the conflict. Peace remains the imperative. The implementation of the peace agreement between the Government and Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin is ongoing. Progress on the agreement is important to demonstrate the willingness of the Government and the people of Afghanistan to establish an equitable peace. Equally important for a peace process to take firm hold will be the demonstrated commitment of the Government to upholding its international obligations to ensure accountability for past abuses by all parties to the conflict and to ensure that the rights of victims remain central.

61. I regret that there has been no tangible progress towards direct talks between the Government and the Taliban. The role of regional countries remains vital in any process, given that they can make important contributions to creating an environment that would enable the pursuit of peace efforts. I call upon all countries involved to maintain their efforts. In that regard, the importance of a constructive relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is recognized by all. I encourage Member States to support efforts to establish direct talks between the Government and the Taliban.

62. Noting the continued importance of supporting political processes in Afghanistan and monitoring the security situation, I request the Security Council to extend the mandate of UNAMA, which is set to expire on 17 March 2017, for a further 12 months. In so doing, I reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to

a sustained partnership with Afghanistan, as set out in the final report of the Tripartite Review Commission on the United Nations in Afghanistan, submitted to the Security Council in September 2015. I note the effective manner in which the existing mandate was discharged throughout 2016, in particular the mission's good offices functions and engagement on critical human rights issues and donor coherence, as well as support for the strengthening of national institutions and capacities in priority areas, as requested by the Government. I call upon Member States to continue to provide the support required in order to maintain our engagement and activities throughout the country.

63. I thank all United Nations personnel in Afghanistan and my Special Representative, Tadamichi Yamamoto, for their continued dedication to fulfilling our commitments in support of the people of Afghanistan under very challenging conditions.

Annex*

Progress achieved against benchmarks

I. Security

Benchmark: sustainable Afghan security institutions and processes capable of ensuring peace and stability and protecting the people of Afghanistan.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Increase in the number of national police and national army personnel mentored, trained and operational according to an agreed structure	• As of November 2016, there were 160,667 personnel serving in the Afghan National Army and 7,660 personnel serving in the Afghan Air Force, adding to a total of 168,327 personnel, a figure 26,673 below the end-state objective for 2016. As of November 2016, 887 female personnel were serving in both the Afghan National Army and in the Afghan Air Force. As of November 2016, there were 147,635 personnel serving in the Afghan National Police, 9,365 below the end-state objective. As of November 2016, 2,635 female personnel serve in the Afghan National Police. • According to reports it is estimated that the actual strength is likely as much as 20% lower for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces than the figures given above, as a result of the so-called ghost soldiers/police officers. • In the course of 2016, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Resolute Support (RS) Mission has continued to train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. • In 2016, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior developed the *National Military Strategy* spanning a period of five years. It foresees an extensive reform of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. The *National Military Strategy* supports and fosters the Afghan National Strategic Planning System, which is comprised of the National Threat Assessment, National Security Policy, National Security Strategy, and the National Campaign Plan.

II. Peace, reintegration and reconciliation

Benchmark: national dialogue and regional engagement to pursue constructive and inclusive process to foster a political environment conducive to peace.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Development and implementation of inclusive national and regional processes to enhance peace, reintegration and reconciliation efforts	• On 11 January 2016, the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) consisting of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and the United States met for the first time to discuss the Afghan peace and reconciliation process in Islamabad. Parties confirmed mutual efforts to facilitate an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process to achieve lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. Three further QCG meetings were held.

Note: The present annex is being circulated in English only.

* The present annex is being issued without formal editing.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• On 21 September 2016 in New York, on the margins of the 71st UN General Assembly, India, Afghanistan and the United Sates held a round of trilateral consultations at which they reaffirmed shared interests in advancing peace and security in the region, as well as countering terrorism.
	• On 22 September 2016, a peace agreement was signed between the Afghan Government and Hizb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HIG). On 6 November 2016, the Afghan government and the HIG Joint Executive Commission for the implementation of the peace agreement officially started its work.
	• On 20 November 2016, a HIG delegation met with President Ghani to discuss the release of HIG prisoners, refugee repatriation and land distribution. Two days later, a HIG delegation visited Pul-e-Charkhi prison in Kabul and met HIG prisoners. All issues regarding the implementation of the peace agreement continue to be addressed by the Joint Executive Commission.
	• There were four meetings convened by Pugwash in 2016 related to peace and security in Afghanistan; 23-24 January 2016 in Doha, Qatar on "Peace and Security in Afghanistan"; 5 September 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan on "moving towards peace in Afghanistan"; 22 November 2016 in Islamabad, Pakistan on "Pakistan-Afghan relations" and; 13 December 2016 in Kabul, Afghanistan on "peace in Afghanistan".
Increased ability by Afghan authorities to gather and provide substantiated, updated and accurate information to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011)	• In 2016 the Government continued to provide substantiated, updated and accurate information to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).
	• On 7 October 2016, the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted their Seventh report, pursuant to resolution 2160 (2014), concerning the Taliban and other associated individuals and entities constituting a threat to the peace, stability and security of Afghanistan. The report substantively built on information gathered and provided by the Afghan authorities.
	• On 13 December 2016, the Afghan Government submitted a request for the delisting of (QDi.088) Gulbuddin Hekmatyar from the United Nations ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List in order to support a signed peace agreement with the Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin. On 3 February Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was delisted.
Increased public support for the peace process through engagement at the community level and with civil society	• On 20 July 2016, independent Ulema from 15 districts of Baghlan province held a gathering in support of the role of religious figures in peace and reconciliation. Around 225 people participated in the gathering, including 150 ulema, as well as tribal representatives, Provincial Council members, Government officials, and civil society. At the conclusion of the gathering, a 10-point resolution was adopted declaring the ulema's full support for peace and reconciliation based on the Islamic principles. The event was supported by UNAMA.
	• On 9 August 2016, 40 youth activists, including 11 women, from Balkh, Sar-e-Pul, Jawzjan and Samangan provinces came together in Mazar-e-Sharif for a regional conference on peace and reconciliation. The conference adopted a declaration calling on the Government and the

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	international community to involve youth in the peace process. The event was supported by UNAMA. • In 2016, the Steering Committee of the Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace, supported by UNAMA, finalized the 34 provincial road maps for peace. Seventeen of these provincial road maps were approved by the Steering Committee during the year and will be used for peacebuilding advocacy and initiatives by Afghan civil society actors across the country. • Between September-December 2016, workshops were conducted by UNAMA working in tandem with the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in all eight regions of the country aimed at building civil society capacity in peace and reconciliation processes through their strengthened advocacy for adoption of the recommendations contained in provincial road maps for peace. • In 2016, UNAMA field offices carried out half a dozen local peace initiatives, offering mediation support to foster Afghan-led facilitation, mediation and reconciliation efforts on a provincial and district level. These included consultation, gatherings and jirgas with ulema, tribal representatives, Provincial Council members, Provincial Peace Council members, Government officials, and youth and women rights activists. • On 26 October 2016, the annual Global Open Day event in Kabul on Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security under the theme "Women and Violent Extremism in Afghanistan", was organized by UNAMA and UN-Women alongside 12 similar regional events across the country.

III. Governance and institution-building:

Benchmark: extension of Government authority throughout the country through the establishment of democratic, legitimate, accountable institutions, down to the local level, with the capacity to implement policies and to be increasingly capable of sustaining themselves.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Increased ability by Afghan authorities and independent electoral institutions to manage and conduct genuine and periodic elections, with due regard to women's participation and constitutionally guaranteed quotas	• In June 2016, the Ministry of Finance announced the Government's intention to allocate USD 31 million for the upcoming elections, of which USD 21 million is in-kind in the form of secondment of civil servants and teachers as polling staff. • On 25 September 2016, a new election legislation merging the Election Law and the Law on Structures, Duties and Authorities of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) and the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) were published in the official Gazette. The new law was passed by legislative decree, and partially incorporated recommendations of the Special Electoral Reform Commission. The IEC was also tasked to prepare a technical study on Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council constituencies within three months of its "establishment".

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• In October 2016, at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, the Afghan Government committed, in connection with the Self-Reliance Through Mutual Accountability Framework deliverables, to move towards "credible, inclusive and transparent elections," based on the Government's pledge to "implement in 2017 the essential electoral reforms and prepare for elections to further restore trust and confidence in the electoral process and its institutions."
	• On 22 November 2016, President Ghani appointed 12 new commissioners to the IEC and the ECC, including three women. The commissioners were appointed through a selection process that was open to civil society and the international community, in consultation with political figures, and following interviews by President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah and other stakeholders.
	• On 12 December 2016, the IEC initiated the selection process of the Chief Electoral Officer. On 12 January the Independent Election Commission recommended three candidates to President Ghani, in a letter signed by only four of the seven commissioners. On 26 January, a spokesperson for the Chief Executive publicly stated that the three nominees were unacceptable due to their alleged lack of qualifications and ties with previous commissioners.
	• In December 2016, the IEC commenced initial discussions on voter registration options, and started preparation of packages to assess and reallocate polling centers.
	• In December 2016, President Ghani established a multi-agency technical committee on delimitation of electoral boundaries which included the IEC.
	• On 9 April 2016, President Ghani requested continuous UN electoral assistance for the next elections. In response, a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) was deployed in country from 11 to 19 May 2016, which recommended key decisions to be made. Upon the adoption of new election legislation and the appointment to the IEC and ECC, a desk study updated the NAM in January 2017. From 10 to 27 February 2017, a team was deployed to start discussions to formulate a project to provide electoral support, with concrete areas of support to be confirmed. UNDP continues to provide technical assistance through a modest Project Initiation Plan as a bridge towards more comprehensive support based on a request.
Establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee and development of anti-corruption benchmarks	• In continuation of the Government's commitment to strengthen the oversight role of the Independent Joint anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC), the Presidential Decree No. 115 declared MEC as an independent institution and obliged all government entities to regularly report on their implementation of MEC recommendations. MEC also issued its New Strategy (2016 to 2018) to actively work with Government institutions to implement anti-corruption reforms.
	• MEC published two special reports. The first one focuses on vulnerabilities to corruption in the Ministry of Public Health and the second report discusses the vulnerabilities to corruption in the context of fuel and gas supply and import to the country.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• MEC also released its Tenth Six-Month Report, covering the period of January to July 2016. The report discussed, among other things, progress in the payment of pensions and benefits to retirees by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled; and the establishment of a Procurement Review and Appeal Committee in line with the Procurement Law.
	• As of December 2016, out of the total of 601 MEC recommendations since 2010, 201 were fully implemented, 196 partially implemented, 23 irrelevant and 181 pending implementation.
Empowerment of anti-corruption institutions to oversee a whole-of-Government approach to anti-corruption	• The Afghanistan Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (AEITI) released its 4th Reconciliation Report in February 2016, covering Government revenues from the oil, gas and mining industries from 2012 to 2013 and is currently preparing its 5th report. AEITI is responsible for Afghanistan's compliance with the requirements for its membership in the Extractives Industries Initiative (EITI) a global standard to promote the open and accountable management of oil, gas, and mineral resources.
	• As part of the Government's increasing efforts to implement its anti-corruption agenda and Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF) commitments, the anti-corruption plans of the five revenue-generating ministries (i.e. Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Mines and Petroleum; Ministry of Commerce and Industries; Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation; and Ministry of Communication and Information Technology) have been formulated and submitted to the Cabinet in October 2016 for review.
	• In September 2016, the Secretariat of the High Council on Rule of Law and Anti-corruption started consultations with stakeholders on the drafting of the national anti-corruption strategy. Subsequently, the Office of the President took over consultations on the formulation of the national anti-corruption strategy. To advance the government's fight against corruption, UNAMA together with the international community has facilitated the stakeholders anti-corruption working group to include relevant government partners, particularly the High Council Secretariat as well as civil society, in following up on the government's anti-corruption commitments in the previous international conferences (i.e., Brussels and London anti-corruption conferences). UNAMA also facilitated donor anti-corruption working group meetings for a consolidated position of the international community and coherent support to the government in this area.
	• Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF) deliverables called for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Government and Civil Society which was signed in late 2015. Though there were limited activities under the MoU in 2016, the existence of the MoU itself was an enabling factor in Afghanistan becoming a member of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in December 2016. At the London Anti-Corruption Summit in May 2016, Afghanistan committed to increase access to information and support civil society participation. UNAMA has continued to liaise with the Administrative Office of the President on further steps of the government in implementing OGP commitments, particularly providing necessary support to enable civil society's participation In the process.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• Afghanistan improved its ranking in the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2016, placing it in 169th position with a four-point increase in the score (from 11 to 15). The Government attributed this to its establishment of anti-corruption bodies.
	• In the course of 2016, the government and judicial institutions designed, established, developed and made operational the Anti-Corruption Justice Center (ACJC) with national jurisdiction, which has already adjudicated seven anti-corruption cases and is formally investigating dozens of high-level cases.
Annual publication of asset declarations of public officials	• In line with commitments in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF), nine senior state officials, including the President and the Chief Executive Officer, 25 Cabinet ministers, and 26 provincial governors registered their assets with the High Office of Oversight and Anti-corruption (HOOAC). Asset verification and publication have not started yet.
	• On 4 May 2016, the High Office of Oversight and Anti-corruption (HOOAC) proposed strict sanctions on public officials who fail to register their assets. This proposal entailed dismissal of 15 Provincial Governors for failing to comply. However, the HOOAC's proposal has not been adopted nor implemented.
Increased capacity of civil servants at the central, provincial and district levels to discharge functions and deliver services	• In an effort to improve the quality of service delivery in the public service, the Civil Service Institute trained 2,572 civil servants in computers applications, English language, human resource management and admin/finance management. The number of staff trained represents 89 percent of the target number of 2,879. Out of the 2,572 trainees, 1,488 were from the central Government and 1,084 from the provincial administrations. Women represented 30 per cent of the participants.
	• In 2016, 106 staff from IDLG attended various capacity trainings in India. The trainings were organized by the Indian Government Civil Service Institutions, in line with the MoU signed between the Independent Directorate for Local Governance and the Indian Government.
Increased transparency and effectiveness of civil service appointments	• As part of the Government's efforts to ensure merit-based civil service recruitments all new appointments were appointed through a merit-based process led by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), bringing the total number of merit based appointments to; 53 (14%) out of 383 district governors, and 5 (15%) out of 34 deputy provincial governors. In addition, 20 (12%) out of 165 Municipal Mayors were appointed through a competitive process led by the President and the IDLG.
Strengthened civil service reform supported by a comprehensive approach to capacity-building and donor-funded technical assistance	• On 9 August 2016, the President appointed his Senior Advisor on Strategic and Public Relations as the new Chairman of the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC). However, he was unable to assume this position, leaving the IARCSC without substantive leadership. To address this gap, the President appointed the deputy head of the Administrative Office of the President to manage IARCSC's operational functions.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• The revised civil service law, which was formulated in 2015, continues to undergo review, due to the protracted bureaucratic processes involved. These two developments have adversely impacted the implementation of civil service reforms and capacity building
Implementation of the subnational governance policy and development of subnational regulatory, financing and budgetary frameworks	• In line with commitments in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF), in January 2016, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) launched consultations with national and subnational institutions and with civil society, with support of UNAMA, on the draft revised Subnational Governance Policy. Subsequently, comments from all 34 provincial administrations and selected government ministries, as well as civil society networks were received and incorporated. Later in the process, the donors provided consolidated comments to the draft policy. The draft policy is currently awaiting Cabinet review. The gap created by the delayed appointment of the IDLG leadership has impacted the Policy's approval and dialogue at the highest political level.
	• The guidelines for annual provincial planning were developed. Their function is to orientate provincial level authorities in the planning process.
	• Local Administration Law amended and submitted to the Lower House. The process was sponsored by IDLG, the Office of the President and technically led by the Ministry of Justice. This law, once enacted, will regulate the affairs related to subnational governance administrative units, including provincial departments, district offices and municipalities.
	• In 2016, the draft Municipal Law has been in an ongoing review process between the Office of the President, IDLG, the Ministry of Justice, Kabul Municipality and other stakeholders. A timeframe for the finalization of the draft law has not been identified, yet. In addition, the Municipal outreach framework and Municipal Advisory Board guidelines were developed and endorsed and the solid waste management guideline developed and implemented.
Development and publication of criteria for administrative boundaries	• National and international institutions continue to use the 2009 internal boundary data set, as stipulated by the Independent Directorate of Local Governance and the Geodesy and Cartography Head Office.
Establishment of adequate infrastructure for functioning Government institutions, especially at the subnational level	• Citizen's Service Centers were constructed in four provinces (Bamyan, Daikundi, Paktya and Panjshir).
	• 13 Provincial Governor's Offices (PGO) were equipped with internet infrastructure to improve IT management systems in the PGOs.
	• 11 Municipalities were provided with internet connections to enable communication with their constituents.
Establishment of credible and accessible judicial and penal systems that respect and uphold the human rights of all citizens	• The National Anti-Corruption Justice Center (ACJC) was established and operational from June 2016. The ACJC conducted six trials, so far, resulting in the conviction of 16 individuals, including individuals charged with bank embezzlement, land grabbing, bank employees, a senior prosecutor and a General at the Ministry of Interior. Trials were held open to the public and in a transparent manner for individuals on major corruption charges. Three of the six trials were affirmed on appeal before the ACJC. Upcoming cases include at least two Major Generals of the Ministry of Interior, the Deputy

Indicators of progress	Metrics
	Minister for Urban Development. Further dozens of cases are currently undergoing formal ACJC prosecutor investigations. • The Afghanistan Independent Bar Association recorded 2677 lawyers in Afghanistan, of which 712 are female. • On 18 April 2016, implementing a request of the Central Prison Directorate, UNAMA released a comprehensive review of prison health services in 31 of 34 Afghan provincial prisons to assess compliance with the Mandela UN international minimum standards of treatment. The report concludes that progress has been made in several key areas but substantial work remains to be done. Pursuant to a recent agreement with the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), prisoners in nearly all Afghan provincial prisons have free access to basic health services either through MOI prison clinics or referrals to MOPH civil hospitals. UNAMA continues to work with national and international counterparts to implement the report's practical recommendations. • The newly revised Penal Code was drafted in line with commitments in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF). The draft legislation, which is still to be considered by Parliament, incorporates crimes in over 50 special laws; and is now consistent with United Nations Convention against Corruption, The Convention against Torture and the United Nations Transnational Organized Crime Convention, as well as modern best practices. The new draft Penal Code defines crimes of violence against women; and incorporates crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide according to the Rome Statute. • The Supreme Court and Attorney General Office advanced efforts combatting corruption in their own institutions. Both instituted strategies and action plans to counteract corruption under the guidance of the Second Vice President and the High Council of Rule of Law's Justice Committee. • On 23 October 2016, UNAMA released the first comprehensive assessment of formal and informal dispute resolution mechanisms, which aim to resolve high-stakes conflicts over access to irrigation water. The report's key finding is that while the recently enacted Water Law provides a comprehensive regulatory scheme, water users continue to rely predominately on local "water masters" to resolve disputes traditionally. The report was presented to the responsible Afghan ministries, who are now supported by UNAMA in the implementation of the recommendations made in the report. • On 4 December 2016, following the direct request of the Minister of Justice, UNAMA released a comprehensive assessment of Afghanistan's juvenile rehabilitation centers (JRC's) to measure compliance with UN international standards for the treatment of juveniles deprived of their liberty. The report found positive trends in Afghanistan's JRCs while also outlining a critical need to improve in-detention education and post-rehabilitation care for young Afghans to help them re-enter society. Continued international support is required for rehabilitation accommodation improvements, especially in JRCs that were not custom-built and fit for purpose. UNAMA is now supporting the Ministry on the implementation of the recommendations made in the report.

IV. Human rights

Benchmark: improved respect for human rights of Afghans, in line with the Afghan Constitution and international law, with particular emphasis on the protection of civilians, the situation of women and girls, freedom of expression and accountability based on the rule of law.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Reduction in the number of incidents of unlawful use of force and intimidation of civilians, through compliance by relevant actors with international law	• Between 1 January and 31 December 2016, UNAMA documented 11,418 civilian casualties (3,498 dead and 7,920 injured). Although civilian deaths decreased by two per cent in 2016, civilian injuries increased by six per cent and the overall civilian casualties increased by three per cent compared to 2015. The number of incidents resulting in civilian casualties increased by 12 per cent in 2016. UNAMA attributed 61 per cent of all civilian casualties to Anti-Government Elements and 24 per cent to Pro-Government Forces (20 percent to Afghan national security forces, two per cent to international military forces and two per cent to pro-Government armed groups). Ten per cent of all civilian casualties resulted from cross-fire between Anti-Government Elements and Afghan national security forces thus could not be attributed to a specific party. Five per cent of civilian casualties resulted from unattributed explosive remnants of war. Ground engagements between Pro-Government Forces and Anti-Government Elements remained the leading cause of civilian casualties, accounting for 4,295 (1,070 deaths and 3,225 injured), followed by detonation of improvised explosive devices with 2,156 civilian casualties (700 deaths and 1,456 injured). • The conflict severely impacted Afghan children in 2016, with UNAMA recording 3,512 child casualties (923 dead and 2,589 injured), a 24 per cent increase over 2015 and the highest number of child casualties recorded by UNAMA in a single year since 2009. This disproportionate rise in child casualties across Afghanistan in 2016 resulted mainly from a 65 per cent increase in civilian casualties from explosive remnants of war — most of whom were children. • The Civilian Casualty Avoidance and Mitigation Board (CAMB) had been transferred from international military forces to the Afghan authorities on 26 January 2016 as advised by UNAMA. The board now functions as a focused mechanism for identifying areas for improving civilian casualty mitigation efforts. The CAMB drafted the national Civilian Casualty Prevention and Mitigation Policy that was approved at the deputy-ministerial level and further established a working group on 2 October 2016 to draft an action plan for its implementation. At its quarterly meeting on 15 November 2016, the CAMB focused discussion on devising plans by relevant ministries for implementation of the Civilian Casualty Prevention and Mitigation Policy once it has been endorsed by the National Security Council. • The Government established a senior-level Protection Working Group that held its first meeting on 30 June 2016 to facilitate a policy-driven dialogue on existing protection of civilian concerns and supporting implementation of improved practices to reduce civilian casualties. • In 2016, the Ministry of Defence drafted rules of engagement to prevent harm to civilians during operations against anti-government elements.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• In its annual report for 2016, the Taliban claimed to document 5,232 civilian casualties between January and December 2016, of which "Americans and the stooge administration" caused 71 per cent (3,836 civilian casualties — 1,504 dead and 2,332 injured); Daesh/Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province, unidentified gunmen and local infighting caused 17 per cent (1,127 civilian casualties — 380 dead and 747 injured); and Taliban caused 12 percent — namely 249 civilian casualties (120 dead and 149 injured. In 2016, the Taliban also established a "civilian casualty committee" under their military structure to investigate civilian casualty incidents in which their fighters were involved.
Improved awareness by Afghans of their rights and by the Government of its obligations	• Although the Government made little tangible progress in 2016 in meeting the commitments set out in its 2015 National Plan on the Elimination of Torture, the Government did renew its commitment to ratify the Optional Protocol on the Prevention of Torture with a new timeline of the end May 2017.
	• In May 2016, the National Assembly took action on Presidential Legislative Decree 76, issued in 2015. It rejected Article 10, a preventative detention measure that allowed the National Security Directorate to request the Supreme Court to intern or hold a person deemed likely to commit a national security crime for up to one year. The Assembly approved the remaining parts of the decree, thus retaining the amendments of the Criminal Procedure Code which allow for extended detentions by national security officials up to 10 days. The decree also gives prosecutors the discretion to extend that detention from 15 to 60 days. Thus, a judge's review and order is not required until 70 days have passed, in violation of both the Afghan constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 9, to which Afghanistan is a party.
	• In its November 2016 "Report on Preliminary Examination Activities in Afghanistan", the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court set out its determination that "there is a reasonable basis to believe that the war crimes of torture and related ill-treatment ha[d] been committed by Afghan government forces, in particular the intelligence agency (National Directorate for Security), and the Afghan National Police, since 2003." In assessing its jurisdiction over these cases under the complementarity principle, the Court noted the Government's failure to respond to multiple requests for information from the Prosecutor since 2008.
Improved impact of, and support for, legal and policy measures to combat violence against women and girls	• On 31 January 2016, the President inaugurated a dedicated fund to sponsor emergency services for women survivors of life-threatening acts of violence, such as medical treatment and temporary accommodation. Actual functioning of these services, however, has so far been limited by inadequate contributions to the fund.
	• On 11 June 2016, the Government approved the strategy and action plan on the elimination of violence against women for the period 2016-2020, which was publicly launched on 5 December 2016.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• With the aim of creating a protective, violence-free environment for women employed in the Afghan National Police, the Ministry of Interior on 11 July 2016 established a complaint mechanism to prevent and respond to sexual harassment against women police; however the mechanism has not yet become fully functional. UNAMA serves as one of four international organizations that have been requested to provide technical support to the complaint mechanism.
	• On 9 November 2016, the Wolesi Jirga approved a law on the elimination of harassment for women and girls. On 25 December 2016, the Meshrano Jirga reviewed the law and proposed amendments to the text to be agreed upon by a joint commission comprised of members of both houses.
	• Based on findings stemming from questionnaires with 178 government employees (113 women) and focus-group discussions carried out with 19 ministries and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, on 25 October 2016, the Ministry of Women's Affairs launched the report "Workplace obstacles: Analysis and Recommendations" in which it highlighted the persistence of work-related harassment and determined other workplace obstacles hampering the presence and expansion of women workers in government institutions. The report provides a basis upon which efforts can be made to address them.
Improved awareness of, and support for, legal and policy measures related to combating impunity and furthering transitional justice	• In 2016, UNAMA closely monitored Government peace and reconciliation initiatives, such as the activities of the High Peace Council in adopting its five-year strategy and the peace agreement between the Government and Hezb-i-Islami (Gulbuddin). The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and transitional justice civil society groups have voiced concerns over the provisions on judicial immunity in the peace agreement and called for the rights of victims to be respected in the peace process.
	• In October 2016, a letter from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to the President in October 2016 expressed concerns about the peace agreement and reminded the Government of Afghanistan's international obligations not only to hold accountable persons responsible for grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law violations, but also to respect the rights of victims and their families, without which peace and reconciliation are not sustainable.
Government fulfilment of reporting requirements on international human rights covenants and conventions and implementation of the recommendations from the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review of Afghanistan	• In April 2016, pursuant to its obligations Article 20 of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment, Afghanistan submitted its Second Periodic Report to the UN Committee against Torture. The Report was submitted under the simplified reporting procedure and consisted of a set of replies to queries raised in the "List of Issues" adopted by the Committee Session in 2010. Afghanistan's Second Periodic Review will be considered by the 60th Session of the UN Committee against Torture.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• Also in 2016, Afghanistan ratified Protocol V to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons on Explosive Remnants of War, which sets out obligations concerning the removal of unexploded ordnance from the battlefield. Ratification should be followed by the implementation of direct measures to ensure the marking, clearance and/or destruction of explosive remnants of war in affected territories under its control.
	• The Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (created to implement the "Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism" on grave violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict) noted significant progress from the Ministry of Interior with regard to expansion of Child Protection Units in Afghan National Police recruitment centres, with 16 additional Units inaugurated in 2016, bringing the overall total to 21 throughout the country.
	• On 28 July 2016, the President issued a directive for the establishment of a national committee to investigate and report on underage recruitment by Afghan security forces. While widely seen as a positive step, the initiative is based on self-reporting by the government.
	• The Ministries of Interior and Education and the National Directorate of Security issued directives during the year to strengthen the protection of children. On 18 June 2016, the Ministry of Interior issued a directive prohibiting media exposure of children arrested on national security charges. On 4 June and 4 July 2016, respectively, the Ministry of Education propagated two directives to all security-related ministries highlighting Afghanistan's commitment to the Safe Schools Declaration and calling on the security forces to stop using schools for military purposes. On 2 July 2016, the National Directorate for Security issued a directive instructing that children no longer be held in its detention facilities and the cessation of transfers of children to its maximum security prison. As of 15 December 2016, the National Directorate of Security had transferred 42 children to juvenile facilities throughout the country.
Increased capacity and commitment of the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, as the Afghan national human rights institution, to respect, protect, fulfil and promote human rights	• In December 2016, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission held a national conference for the adoption of the National Action Plan for Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Afghanistan. This pivotal initiative promises to consolidate and strengthen efforts by civil society and international actors such as the EU and its partners to improve protection of human rights defenders in Afghanistan.
	• In response to allegations in the media of widespread abuse of children by Afghan police in the southern region of the country, in January 2016 the Attorney-General's office tasked the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission offices in Kandahar, Uruzgan and Helmand provinces to present information to it and refer cases of sexually abused children. While widely seen as a positive step, the initiative is based on self-reporting by the government.
	• With regard to the practice of *bacha bazi* ("boy play"), the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission led efforts during the year to prohibit and criminalize the practice, resulting in the production of final draft legislation in March 2016. In parallel, definitions and both

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	protective and punitive measures linked to the practice have been included in the language of the revised penal code, as well as the Child Act, which remained under review.

V. Economic and social development

Benchmark: Government policies supported by the international community that promote sustainable economic growth and contribute to overall stability.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
National priority programmes are designed and implemented with international support and endorsement	• In preparation for the 4-5 October Brussels Conference on Afghanistan the Government developed the new Afghanistan Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), and which will serve as the overarching guidance for new National Priority Programs. The ANPDF replaces the Afghan National Development Strategy concluded in 2013. • Progress has been made on the preparation of five out of 11 NPPs. In October, the Government inaugurated the Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project, the first phase of the 10-year Citizens' Charter NPP. In line with commitments in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF), the Government presented the concept papers of four other NPPs to the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October 2016: Women's Economic Empowerment, Urban National Priority Program, National Infrastructure Plan, and the Comprehensive Agriculture Development Plan.
More equitable distribution of development assistance and Government expenditure throughout Afghanistan	• The implementation of the Provincial Budgeting Policy was piloted in four ministries: Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and Ministry of Irrigation and Livestock. Relevant comprehensive guidelines for concerned Government agencies for effective implementation of the Policy were issued by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) on 22 March 2016. As a follow-up to the pilot and as part of the Provincial Budgeting Policy implementation, a total of US $34 million (US $1 million for each province) was allocated in the 2017 national budget for development projects. • The Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the Afghan Parliament) rejected the 1396 Budget (2017) on 21 December 2016, citing imbalance in the allocation of funds among the provinces and low execution rate of the development budget. This resulted in a regular consultation between the Parliamentary Finance and Budget Committee and the Ministry of Finance that resulted in some amendment to the draft budget. The budget was eventually approved by Parliament on 16 January 2017.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Increased revenue collection and sustainable growth based on Afghan resources	• The Government's ongoing initiatives, including anti-corruption efforts, contributed to higher than expected revenue collection in 2016. The revenues were reported at USD 2,4 billion compared to IMF projected revenues of USD 2,04 billion. The achieved revenue collection represents therefore a 20 per cent increase amidst low economic growth, currency devaluation, worsening security, and deteriorating trade relations. Most of the in revenue collection is attributable to effective collection of non-tax revenues and arrears, as well as revenues from ministries (Ministry of Urban Development Affairs and Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock) and Da Afghanistan Bank. However, tax collection decreased for large and small tax payers by 8 per cent and 5 per cent respectively, while for medium tax payers tax collection increased by 16 per cent according to the preliminary report of the Ministry of Finance. • The World Bank's Doing Business Indicators have recorded Afghanistan's drop in ranking on the ease of paying taxes, where Afghanistan's rank dropped 13 places. Afghanistan's rank dropped one place, now ranking 183 of the 190 countries on the index. There was a major reform of the taxation system in 2016, which saw a doubling of the base business tax from two to four per cent, while a number of indirect taxes were also implemented. According to business owners, these new tax reforms are making it more difficult for them to keep their businesses profitable. • In addition to a decline in Afghanistan's rank on the ease of paying taxes, the World Bank's Doing Business Indicators survey recorded a deterioration in Afghanistan's rank on six of the remaining indicators used to assess the business and growth enabling environment in the country. The most significant declines were measured in the areas of starting new businesses, access to credit and amenities such as electricity. Afghanistan's overall ranking in the Doing Business Indicators survey, comprising a composite of all ten indicators, dropped by one place. • The World Bank estimated the GDP growth for 2016 in Afghanistan at 1.2 per cent, but projected a better growth rate for 2017 at 1.8 per cent. However, with population growth rates between 2 per cent and 3 per cent, this rate of economic growth would seem insufficient to maintain income levels, suggesting that poverty levels will increase. • On 13 December 2016, the Objections Review Directorate in the Ministry of Finance Afghanistan Revenue Department in the Ministry of Finance presented a report of a Taxation Working Group to donors. The aim of the report, which was developed in line with a commitment in the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF), was to identify challenges in tax collection that arise from the various exemptions provided to donor-funded initiatives, and to establish a mechanism for resolving questions. Consultations on the report will proceed in 2017, in line with SMAF commitments.

VI. Regional cooperation

Benchmark: sustained and effective regional coordination in support of prosperity, peace and stability.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Improved coordination of regional bodies and increased regional investments	• On 8 April 2016, in the 24th Leading Committee in Ashgabad, stakeholders signed the Investment Agreement on the TAPI Pipeline. On 23 April, in Almaty, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Pakistan finalized the project implementation documents and made the final decision for putting the CASA 1000 in action. • On 25 April 2016, the Afghan Foreign Minister met with the Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan to discuss developments regarding the TAPI project, expanding bilateral trade and the need for peace, stability and security in the region. • On 12 May 2016, in Tursunza de Tajikistan, Afghanistan's Chief Executive, Pakistan's Prime Minister, Tajikistan's President, and Kyrgyzstan's Prime Minister jointly inaugurated the CASA-1000 project. • On 16 May 2016, during the state visit of the Chief Executive to China, seven bilateral Cooperation Agreements were signed between both countries. • On 23 May 2016, in Tehran, President Ghani, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Indian Prime Minister witnessed the signing of the Agreement on the Establishment of a Trilateral Transport and Transit Corridor. Its aim is to facilitate the flow of commerce between the three countries, potentially extending into Central Asia. • On 4 June 2016, in Herat Province, the Afghan President and the Indian Prime Minister inaugurated the $290 million Salma Dam hydroelectric power project. • From 23 to 24 June 2016, in Tashkent, the Afghan President attended the 16th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). He had bilateral meetings with the Russian President, the Uzbek President, the Kazakh President, and the Kyrgyz President. • On 19 July 2016, in Pakistan, representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan and UNHCR met for the 27th Tripartite Commission Meeting. They signed the extension of the existing Tripartite Agreement governing voluntary repatriation until 31 December 2016. • On 3 August 2016, in Urumqi China, the Inaugural High Level Military Leader Meeting on Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism in Counter Terrorism took place and was attended by representatives of the Armed Forces of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and Tajikistan. It was agreed to establish the "quadrilateral mechanism" to coordinate and support each other, including in the areas of intelligence sharing, anti-terrorist capability-building, and joint anti-terrorist training.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	• On 5 August 2016, in Tehran, the Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister attended the third political consultation meeting between Afghanistan and Iran. Both sides emphasized strengthening, consolidating and extending formal relations between the two countries and exchanged views on mutual cooperation in security and regional affairs, transit trade, economy, cultural relations, consulate and refugee affairs and extending interministerial relations and cooperation.
	• On 7 September 2016, senior officials of Afghanistan and Iran attended a cross-border ceremony in Shamtigh in Iran to mark the completion of the Iranian part of the planned Khaf-Herat railway.
	• From 14 to 15 September 2016, the Afghan President visited India and met with the Indian Prime Minister. The two leaders discussed the regional situation and expressed grave concern at continued use of terrorism and violence in the region.
	• On 4 October 2016, in Brussels, President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah and Foreign Minister Rabbani participated in a side event to the Brussels conference on Afghanistan focused on Regional Economic Cooperation in Afghanistan. The high-level event focused on movement of energy, goods and data. It further identified 11 priority projects.
	• From 18 to 19 October 2016, in Tashkent Uzbekistan, the Afghan Foreign Minister attended the 43rd session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In the margins, an extradition agreement with Uzbekistan was signed.
	• From 3 to 4 November 2016, the Chief Executive attended the 15th Shanghai Cooperation Organization Head of Governments Summit in Bishkek. Afghanistan's Permanent membership in the organization was discussed.
	• On 16 November 2016, in Baku, the Lapis Lazuli route agreement was finalized by Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. It needs to be signed by heads of states.
	• In 2016, there were four meetings of the 6+1 group, which includes Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and USA. The meetings were held on 4 February in Berlin, on 6 June in Istanbul, on 22 September in New York and the last one on 2 December in Amritsar, India.
	• In 2016, the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process — supported by UNAMA through facilitation and the provision of good offices — held several meetings between participating countries and organizations to further confidence-building measures. On 4 March, in Delhi, a meeting of the Regional Technical Group of Trade, Commerce and Investment Opportunities Confidence Building Measure was held. On 10 March, in Tehran, a meeting

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	of the Regional Technical Group of the Education Confidence Building Measure was held. On 3 April, in Kabul, a meeting of the Regional Technical Group of the Counter-Terrorism Confidence Building Measure was held where seven activities were prioritized for 2016. On 6 September, in Ashgabat, a meeting of the Regional Technical Group of the Regional Infrastructure Confidence Building Measure was held. On 9 December, in Astana, a meeting of the Regional Technical Group of the Disaster Management Confidence Building Measure was held to review the implementation of activities in the 2016 Action plan. • In 2016, the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, which was co-chaired by Afghanistan and India, held three Senior Officials' Meetings. On 26 April, in Delhi, a Senior Officials Meeting was held setting the theme "Addressing Challenges, Achieving Prosperity" for the 2016 Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. On 23 September, a Senior Officials' meeting was held on the margins of the General Assembly in New York. On 3 December, the last Senior Officials' meeting of 2016 was held in Amritsar. UNAMA supported the Afghan Government in these meetings to help the process move forward. • On 4 December 2016, in Amritsar, the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process Ministerial Conference was held with support of UNAMA. President Ghani and Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the conference. The Amritsar declaration focuses on the importance of regional collaboration in countering security threats common to the region, and to capitalize on economic opportunities. The declaration also calls for the development of a regional approach to counter radicalization, exploration of how to strengthen the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises in the region, as well as to continue the process of developing the Regional Counter Terrorism Strategy as per the 2015 Islamabad Declaration. • On 27 December 2016, a trilateral meeting of Pakistan, China and Russia took place in Moscow with a focus on Afghanistan. In addition to expressing concern about the rise of extremist groups and agreeing on continued efforts towards an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process, both Russia and China stated that they will increase efforts for delisting members of the Afghan Taliban from the UN sanctions lists.

VII. Partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community

Benchmark: coherent support by the international community for Afghan priorities within an Afghan-led coordination framework.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Increased percentage of aid aligned with the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and Government priorities	• In line with its current Aid Management Policy, the Government considers assistance delivered through on-budget mechanisms to be 100 per cent aligned with Government priorities, and in 2016 donors continued to retain the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF) commitment to deliver at least 50 per cent of Official Development Assistance (ODA) through such mechanisms. Donors also continued to adhere to the SMAF commitment to align 80 per cent of ODA overall with Government priorities. The Ministry of Finance Aid Management Directorate continues to collect data on, and to discuss alignment of, Official Development Assistance through the annual Development Cooperation Dialogues process, but did not publish data on overall alignment of aid in 2016, as new National Priority Programs are still being developed under the framework of the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF).
Improved accountability of procurement and contracting on behalf of the Government and the international community	• The National Procurement Authority (NPA) expanded the "Coalition of Reform", mainly consisting of partners from civil society, private sector, the Government and international development partners. Under this framework, the NPA approved more than 2,000 large and medium contracts worth AFN 250 billion (US$ 3 billion), resulting in AFN 18.3 billion (US$ 270 million) worth of savings. It also blacklisted about 100 companies who failed to meet the requirements of transparency and accountability.
Strengthening of the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board in support of the Kabul process and as a means of regular review of progress on Afghan priorities and mutual commitments	• Co-chaired by the Minister of Finance and UNAMA's SRSG, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board met twice in Kabul, on 4 April and 4 September, to review and advance Government preparations for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, and to review progress on joint commitments under the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF). The meetings featured remarks by President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah, and updates from a number of ministers and senior Government officials, as well as stakeholders from the Afghan private and civil society sectors. Civil society representatives voiced concern over the quality and pace of reforms, perceived corruption within the justice sector and the shrinking space for civil society and human rights defenders due to insecurity. International partners addressed the gathering on a range of subjects featuring both highlights of reform, development progress and areas for improvement. • Much of UNAMA's efforts in the area of donor coordination in 2016 focused on facilitating the preparations for the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan in October. In addition to the Joint

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	coordination and Monitoring Board meetings, regular discussions took place in existing fora chaired by the Ministry of Finance and UNAMA and involving the major donors. The issues discussed included efforts in the areas of anti-corruption, revenue generation, poverty and economic growth. In advance of the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, UNAMA worked with Government and donors to elaborate a new set of "deliverables," or priority reform commitments, under the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF). In follow-up to the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan, UNAMA continues to work with partners to facilitate progress on these commitments through regular working-level fora in Kabul. • UNAMA also technically assisted Afghan civil society in the preparation of their position papers and statements for the JCMB meetings held in April and September 2016 and the Brussels Conference in October, and advocated for civil society representation in all these three meetings. • UNAMA further provided technical advice to the Civil Society Working Committee (CSWC) in the selection of the 10 delegates to the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan; facilitated briefing/ consultations between SRSG/DSRSG with 10 civil society delegates to the Conference; as well as consultations between civil society and Ministry of Finance; provided technical assistance to CSWC in following up in the aftermath of the Conference, especially where this Committee undertakes the steps to start with monitoring the implementation of Government and International Community's Brussels commitments.

VIII. Counter-narcotics

Benchmark: sustained trend in the reduction of poppy cultivation, narcotics production and drug addiction.

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
Decrease in poppy cultivation, narcotics production and addiction rates	• Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan increased by ten per cent in 2016 with a total area under cultivation estimated at 201,000 hectares over the area of 183,000 hectares cultivated in 2015. Opium production in 2016 was estimated at 4,800 tons, representing a 43 per cent increase over the 3,300 tons produced in 2015. • In 2016 opium prices increased in all regions of Afghanistan. At almost US$ 0.9 billion or the equivalent of roughly 5 per cent of Afghanistan's estimated GDP, the farm-gate value of opium production increased by 57 per cent in 2016 with respect to past year (not adjusted for inflation). • Helmand remained the country's major opium poppy cultivating province, followed by Badghis, Kandahar, Uruzgan1, Nangarhar, Farah, Badakhshan, and Nimroz. In 2016, the

Indicators of progress	*Metrics*
	number of poppy-free provinces in Afghanistan decreased from 14 to 13. Opium poppy cultivation in Jawzjan, in the Northern region lost its poppy-free status, which it had regained in 2008. The average opium yield amounted to 23.8 kilograms per hectare, which was 30 per cent higher than in 2015.
Increase in effective interdiction and counter-trafficking efforts	• In 2016, Afghan law enforcement authorities conducted a total of 2,192 counter-narcotics operations which resulted in seizures of 4,759 kg of heroin, 47,048 kg of morphine, 48,022 kg of opium, 66 kg of methamphetamine, 686 MDMA tables, 352,171 kg of hashish, 72,231 kg of solid precursor chemicals, 15,034 Litres of liquid precursor chemicals. In addition to drugs, these operations led to the dismantling of 57 heroin and eight methamphetamine manufacturing laboratories, arrest of 2,548 suspects and seizure of 485 vehic'es, 212 weapons, 347 mobile phones and seven radios.
Increase in licit agriculture and related private capital investment in areas previously used for poppy cultivation	• In spite of the 10 per cent increase in poppy cultivation and 43 per cent production in 2016, there was a positive progress noted in licit crop production and productivity. According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, trade figures increased by 20 per cent of which most were the export of not only dry fruits but vegetables and fresh fruits such as pomegranates, grapes and apples. These fruits were exported to Pakistan, United Arab Emirates and India. • A survey of the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and industries (ACCI) indicates that the grape production increased by at least 20 per cent in Parwan, Samangan, Sar-e-Pol, Jawzjan, Herat and Kandahar provinces in 2016. In Parwan, the production of grapes was doubled while in Samangan the production increased from 7,000 tons in 2015 to 9,000 tons in 2016. Kandahar grapes were valued at US$ 2.3 million and were mostly exported to Pakistan, India and UAE. • A report by Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) indicated a nine and a half pe. cent increase in cultivation and production of wheat in Afghanistan. The report identified the harvest of four and a half million tons of wheat of which more than three and a half million tons were produced from irrigated land and around 850,000 tons from rain fed fields. The report also highlights the improved techniques used for the production of vegetables in Afghanistan but the lack of capacity and quality outputs remains a constraint in marketing the productions in the region and beyond.